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Housekeepers' Chats

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Monday, July 2, or
later

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "A Fourth of July Dinner." Menu, recipes, questions and answers from Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletins available: "Stain Removal, Home Methods."

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The other day I asked my friend, the Menu Specialist, if she'd give us something appealing, in the way of a Fourth of July dinner.

"I'd like a menu," I said, "which is ritzy enough for company, delicious enough to please the most particular of guests, easy to prepare -- and, well, something different, if you please."

The Menu Specialist grew thoughtful. "If I were in New England, living on the coast," said she, "I know exactly what I'd want for my Fourth of July dinner: Boiled Fresh Salmon with an Egg Sauce; Fresh Peas; New Potatoes; and Strawberry Shortcake. Is that ritzy enough for your radio audience, Aunt Sammy?"

"Sounds mighty good," I said, "for those who can get Fresh Salmon. That I had in mind was a dinner with Fried Chicken, and Cream Gravy, and --"

"Fried Chicken!" said the Menu Specialist. "I thought you wanted something different!"

"Something different for dessert," I explained, slightly embarrassed, because of course I'd had Fried Chicken and Cream Gravy in mind, all the time. Somehow, I can't picture a Fourth of July dinner which doesn't include Fried Chicken. When the Menu Specialist realized I'd had my heart set on Fried Chicken and Cream Gravy all this long while, she obligingly planned the following dinner. Shall we write it? Fried Spring Chicken; Cream Gravy; Parsley Potatoes; Fresh String Beans; Garden Salad; and for dessert, something different-- Muskmelon, with Lemon Ice.

Now, if you want to learn how to fry a chicken, so that it comes out of the skillet a rich golden brown, with tasty morsels of crust clinging to it, here's how:

First, select young, plump chickens. Wash them, draw them, disjoint, and cut into pieces suitable for serving. Then wipe the pieces dry, sprinkle with

salt and pepper, and rub well with flour. That's right--wipe the pieces dry, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and rub well with flour. In a heavy skillet, heat a generous quantity of well-flavored fat, to just below the smoking point. First, put in the larger and thicker pieces of chicken, so that each piece will be surrounded by the hot fat. Partly cover the skillet, and watch closely, to prevent scorching. Turn the chicken as soon as it becomes golden brown. Then reduce the heat, and cook until tender. When the chicken is done, take it from the skillet, and drain on brown paper, to absorb the excess fat. Nothing difficult about frying a chicken, is there?

To make the Cream Gravy, allow two tablespoons of flour to each two tablespoons of chicken fat-- two tablespoons of flour, to each two tablespoons of fat, stirring constantly. Then add one and one-half cups of rich milk. Cook until thickened, adding more salt and pepper if needed. Sprinkle finely chopped parsley over the gravy, and serve hot with the chicken.

The vegetables on our menu today are Parsley Potatoes and Fresh String Beans. The salad is a Garden Salad. I gave the Salad a name, because it seemed to need one. Garden salad is made of Tomatoes, Cucumbers, and Lettuce, with French Dressing. I think the Salad Dressing would be especially nice, if made with tarragon vinegar.

The Menu Specialist said we might have something different for dessert, and she's as good as her word. Muskmelon, with Lemon Ice served inside. Doesn't that intrigue you? Here's the recipe, for Lemon Ice -- five ingredients:

3/4 cup lemon juice (from 5 to 6 lemons)
2-1/2 cups water
3/4 cup sugar, or more if desired
1/4 teaspoon salt, and
1 egg white.

The five ingredients again, for Lemon Ice: (Repeat)

Prepare a sirup of the water and sugar. Boil for two minutes. When cold, add the strained lemon juice and salt. Freeze with a mixture of one part of salt, to four to six parts of ice. Turn the crank slowly, until the mixture is partly frozen, then quickly add the beaten white of egg, and continue to turn the crank until the ice is firm. Remove the dasher, press the contents solidly into the can, cover with waxed paper and replace the top of the can. Pack with more ice and salt, and allow to stand an hour or more to ripen before serving.

To repeat the menu: Fried Spring Chicken; Cream Gravy; Parsley Potatoes; Fresh String Beans; Garden Salad; Muskmelon, with Lemon Ice.

Today's questions are of a practical nature, and I think we'll all profit by listening to the answers.

First question: "Please tell me how to remove fresh fruit stains from a white linen napkin."

Answer: Practically all fruit stains, when they are fresh and still moist, can be removed with boiling water, or even warm water. After the stains have dried, they are much more difficult to handle.

To remove the fruit stain from your white linen napkin, stretch the napkin over a bowl, fasten with a string, or an elastic band, if necessary, and pour boiling water over it from a teakettle held at a height of 3 or 4 feet, so that the water will strike the stain with some force. If it's a very heavy stain, you may need to rub it, between applications of boiling water. If the stain remains, after this treatment, hang the wet napkin in the sun to dry, and perhaps the stain will bleach out.

Fruit stains which will not respond to the boiling water treatment, may often be bleached out by the old reliable "lemon juice and bright sunshine" method.

Second question: "Is there any way to remove a green grass stain from a white linen skirt?"

Answer: If the material is washable, use hot water and soap, as in ordinary laundering. You'll have to rub the stain quite vigorously. If traces of the grass stain remain, they may be bleached out with Javelle water.

Third question: "How can I remove mildew from a white linen towel?"

Answer: Very fresh mildew stains can be washed out with soap and water. Drying in the sun helps to bleach the spots. Another remedy for mildew is sour milk. Soak the stains overnight in sour milk, and then place in the sun, without rinsing. Repeat the treatment several times, if necessary. Slight stains can be removed in this way. Lemon juice and salt will also remove slight mildew stains.

I haven't mentioned lately the bulletin on Stain Removal. However, there is such a bulletin, and a very practical one. A radio listener wrote me the other day that she had used her Stain Removal bulletin more than any other; that she had saved quite a bit of money by learning how to remove the most common stains. This bulletin is free, and it tells how to remove all kinds of stains, from tobacco juice to axle grease.

The next question is from a housekeeper who asks whether she can reduce the ice bill by wrapping the ice in a newspaper, or a cloth.

That's a good question. Two or three women have told me that they save ice by wrapping it in heavy paper, or heavy cloth. No doubt they do, but that

isn't the point-- we are trying to save food, not ice.

When ice is placed in a refrigerator it melts by absorbing heat from the surrounding air. This air, becoming colder and colder, settles to the lower part of the refrigerator, while the warmer air rises, gives up heat by coming in contact with the ice, and in turn becomes chilled, and sinks to the bottom. These cold currents of air come in contact with the food, absorb heat from the food, and so cool it.

All this being true, we want the cooled air to circulate continuously and rapidly, in the refrigerator. All spaces for the passage of air from the ice chamber should be kept open. It is a mistake to wrap the ice in paper, or in cloth. Such a covering retards the circulation of air, and insulates the ice from the rest of the refrigerator.

Each article of food, placed in the refrigerator, contains a definite amount of heat, that will melt a definite amount of ice. Therefore, don't put hot foods into the refrigerator. Cool them to room temperature first.

There's another way to make ice last longer. Don't use it to cool such things as the tops of carrots, the outside leaves of lettuce, or the thick paper wrapped around parcels which come from the market, because all these things will be discarded later. Furthermore, ice is wasted when vegetables and fruits that are to be prepared almost immediately, are placed in the refrigerator, and taken out again after a few minutes.

As I said before, the main object in using a refrigerator is to save food, not ice, and real economy means having well-insulated walls, in keeping the ice chamber well-stocked, in opening the doors only when necessary, and for as brief periods as possible, and in putting nothing into the refrigerator that does not need to be kept cool. Every food put into the refrigerator should pay for the ice it melts.

The refrigerator should be kept scrupulously clean. Only clean food, clean ice, and clean containers should be put into it. Any food spilled should be wiped up immediately with a clean, damp cloth. The ice chamber, the drainpipe, and the trap must be kept free from sediment and slime. They should be washed occasionally with hot water and washing soda, and rinsed with cold water.

One more question--a listener in Denver wants a recipe for making Baking Powder Biscuits with Mashed Potatoes.

Six ingredients are required for Baking Powder Biscuits with Mashed Potatoes:

3/4 cup milk
3 cups sifted soft wheat flour
1-1/2 cups riced potatoes, unsalted
4 to 6 tablespoons fat
3 teaspoons baking powder, and
1-1/2 teaspoons salt

Listen carefully, please, while I repeat the six ingredients: (Repeat)

Sift together the flour, salt and baking powder. Into this mixture of dry ingredients work the fat and riced potato after it has cooled. Then add the milk to form a soft dough. On a lightly floured board, roll out and cut the biscuits in the usual way. Bake in hot oven 450 to 500° Fahrenheit.

Next program: "Dresses for Little Girls."

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